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TERRORISM

ASIA, THE PACIFIC, AND NONPROLIFERATION

August 8, 2019

Dr. Steven Dillingham, Director  
U.S. Census Bureau  
4600 Silver Hill Road  
Washington, DC 20233

Dear Dr. Dillingham:

I write to express my concerns about the Census Bureau's decision to not hire non-citizens to help conduct the upcoming 2020 Census, a reversal from previous decennial censuses. While legal permanent residents or non-citizens with work visas have been a small percentage of hires in previous decennial censuses, they are critical to reaching hard-to-count and immigrant communities and ensuring a complete count. I urge you to re-consider this decision and, as has been done in the past, seek a waiver from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) for the Census Bureau to hire non-citizens.

I recently held a roundtable discussion with more than two dozen community partners including a variety of non-profit organizations, local government agencies, religious leaders and immigrant rights groups on the challenges to the upcoming census as well as what actions need to be taken to ensure a complete count. The decision to not hire non-citizens and its anticipated impact on census participation was an extremely serious concern for every person in attendance.

The non-response follow up operation, where enumerators go door-to-door to get in person responses from households that have not responded to the census, is key to ensuring that the 2020 Census counts all U.S. residents. In a strong job market such as the one we currently have, the Census Bureau needs to do all it can to recruit individuals eligible to work in the United States, including individuals who will be trusted in communities least likely to respond to the 2020 Census due to fear or a lack of knowledge about the process. In some areas, non-citizens may have the unique language skills and cultural ties that would be beneficial to the Bureau's goal of ensuring a complete count. The arbitrary decision to limit hiring for the 2020 Census to citizens hinders that effort.

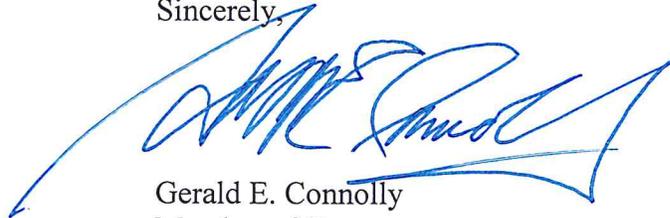
According to a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report issued last month, the Census Bureau plans to hire nearly 400,000 field staff from a pool between 2.4 million and 2.6 million applicants. I understand that at this time, approximately 550,000 people have applied for enumerator positions and am concerned and somewhat skeptical that the Bureau will be able to achieve its goal of receiving approximately 2.5 million applications. I ask that you share with my office your recruitment and hiring plans. I also ask for clarification on the total number of field staff the Bureau intends to hire. On two occasions, during a tour of the Census Office in Fairfax, VA and again in email correspondence between my office and the Bureau's congressional

liaison, my office was informed that the Bureau was planning on hiring approximately 500,000 field staff. Lastly, please provide my office with the number of enumerator positions that were filled for the 2010 census.

The Census Bureau is promoting heavily its community partnership efforts to supplement the Complete Count Committees which are formed by state and local governments to assist with reaching communities such as minority communities or other groups that may be hesitant to participate. Please provide my office with an update on the status of this program including the estimated number of community partners you are trying to engage and any challenges you are facing with meeting your goals.

With the Census Bureau expecting a historically low response rate to the 2020 Census, it will need to hire more enumerators to go door-to-door than in 2010. Therefore, it is troubling that the Bureau would choose to tie its own hands in a manner that it has not in previous censuses by eliminating legal residents from consideration. Fortunately, there is still time to reverse this decision and ensure that hard to count communities receive a full count. I urge you to work with the Department of Commerce and OPM to seek a waiver to allow the Census Bureau to hire the eligible and qualified applicants it needs to conduct a successful 2020 Census.

Sincerely,



Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress  
11<sup>th</sup> District, Virginia